

## Friendship Heights TMD Advisory Committee Meeting

Summary – Meeting of July 8, 2008

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### Voting Members Present

David Glass	Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers
Mary Herman	Polinger Shannon and Luchs (Employer of greater than 50)
N. Leslie Olson	Chevy Chase Land Company
Steven Robins, Esq.	Lerch, Early and Brewer, Representing Wisconsin Place
Robert Schwarzbart (Chair)	Friendship Heights Village Council
Jeffrey Slavin	Town of Somerset
R. Mallory Starr	Somerset House Management Association

### Non-Voting Members Present

Sandra L. Brecher	DPWT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
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### TMD Staff Present

Jim Carlson	DPWT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
David Kantor	DPWT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services

### Absent

Jessica Adams (Vice Chair)	The JBG Companies
Bob Cope	Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
Chief Roy Gordon	Chevy Chase Village Police
Leonard Grant	Friendship Heights Village Council
Capt. Russell Hamill	Montgomery County Police
Charles Kines	M-NCPPC
Gregory Knoop	Oudens + Knoop Architects (Employer of fewer than 50)
Carlean Russell	Saks Fifth Avenue (Employer of greater than 50)
Kenneth Williams	GEICO

### Guests

April Birnbaum	Lerch, Early and Brewer
Bill Farley	Town of Somerset
Leslie Hamm	B-CC Services Center
Bob Joiner	The Agenda News
Julian Mansfield	Village of Friendship Heights
Bill McCloskey	Brookdale Resident
Lt. Michael Price	MC Police District 2
Charlie Scott	WMATA-Government Relations

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### Items 1, 2, & 3 – Introductions, Review/Approval of Minutes, Chair's Comments:

Members and guests introduced themselves. Committee Chair **Robert Schwarzbart** said that he is looking forward to serving as Chair in a permanent role. He thanked the group for the opportunity, and especially

thanked outgoing Chair **Bob Cope** for his work over the past year. **Mr. Schwarzbart** additionally thanked **Sandra Brecher** and **Jim Carlson** for their work in staffing these meetings.

Without a quorum, June's minutes were tabled until the September meeting.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** reminded the Committee that during the May meeting, **Stephen Petruccelli** from WMATA came in to brief the Committee on the status of the new Friendship Heights Bus Terminal, which has been renovated to accommodate the new higher buses. Thanks to **Mr. Petruccelli**, we have been able to continue to use the terminal. During his attendance at a previous meeting, **Mr. Petruccelli** pointed out that WMATA was the only public transit organization in the country without a dedicated Federal funding source, and suggested that the Advisory Committee advocate for this position.

Mr. Schwarzbart introduced **Charlie Scott**, WMATA Government Relations Officer, to further discuss the dedicated funding issue.

**Item 4 – WMATA Briefing/Q&A: Mr. Scott** briefed the Committee about funding and legislation initiatives that could affect the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA).

WMATA is the only mass transit system in the country without a dedicated funding source. There is a bill pending in Congress calling for authorized funding of \$150 million of the system over a ten year period. At present, this is only a request for authorization, which means that once it passes Congress it is ultimately up to the President in any given budget cycle to approve it and appropriate the funds in the President's budget. The authorization would also increase the size of WMATA's Board of Directors by two voting and two non-voting members. The \$150 million would be matched by DC, Maryland and Virginia at \$50 million from each jurisdiction. Maryland and DC have agreed to the matching funds; Virginia is still deciding the issue. The Virginia legislature is deliberating whether this is a state-wide issue or whether it should apply only to areas of Northern Virginia. The bill also has additional provisions that WMATA would need to address, including the need to establish an Inspector General at Metro (this has been done).

As of now, **Sen. Tom Coburn**, who is on the record against most earmarks, has put a hold on the legislation. Since then, however, the authorizations have been added to the pending Amtrak reauthorization legislation, which is now going through a Congressional Conference Committee. This strategy assumes that it will be more difficult for individual Senators to block a piece of legislation that goes through a Conference Committee than one which goes through the usual process.

All transportation entities are looking closely at the reauthorization of **SAFETEA-LU** (*Safe Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users*; [www.fhwa.dot.gov/safetealu/index.htm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/safetealu/index.htm)), the Federal funding source for surface transportation nationwide. Some in Congress are opposed to re-authorization of SAFETEA-LU, and would instead like to see a new comprehensive transportation bill to replace it.

A portion of the SAFETEA-LU funding is dedicated to highways and a portion to transit. The transit portion is a major source of funding for WMATA, and applies to both its bus and rail systems. To illustrate the current funding limitation: WMATA recently requested \$260 million for rail car funding, and has received \$104 million, incrementally in three payments of \$35 million, \$34 million, and \$35 million. WMATA receives over \$150 million in funding, most of which is for bus capital and rail modernization. With a 106 mile rail system, keeping it in good repair is a very capital intensive proposition. The Federal funds received are used solely for capital maintenance. The operating budget is borne by riders and local jurisdictions. At present, no Federal funds can be used to defray operating costs.

**Mr. Scott** stressed the importance of regular bus and rail maintenance issues, citing problems in other systems around the country as an example. Although it is not as exciting to replace a section of track rather than funding

expansion, it is at least as important for the sake of safety. Metro is an aging system. Much of the system was built in the 1970s. Since WMATA is a two track system (contrasted with 4 tracks in New York and some other large systems), the time window to perform needed track maintenance is relatively small, except when WMATA shuts down a whole section of track during a weekend.

**Robert Schwarzbart** inquired about persistent mechanical problems, especially problems with escalators and elevators. He noted that much larger and older systems seem to experience fewer problems. **Mr. Scott** responded that Metro is one of the largest escalator operators in the country, and that the longest escalator in the western hemisphere is at the Wheaton station. Many of these escalators are outdoors and thus exposed to the elements. WMATA uses more escalators and elevators than many other systems. For example, the Greater Boston Subway System ('The T') has no escalators. Therefore, with more moving parts, WMATA has greater opportunities for mechanical failure. WMATA does, however, make every attempt to notify passengers of escalator and elevator outages, and provides shuttle service between stations. **Mr. Scott** added that the outdoor canopies seen at some stations are not only aesthetically pleasing, but also serve a functional purpose of helping to protect the escalators from the elements. Without this functional purpose, WMATA would not have received funding for the canopies.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** noted that there also seem to be frequent mechanical problems affecting the trains. Additionally, back when the system was newer, WMATA had to shut down because the system did not spend the necessary \$5,000 to cover the tracks in the winter. **Mr. Schwarzbart** said there seemed to be a "flimsiness" in the construction that has resulted in countless difficulties.

Given some of the mechanical problems, **Mr. Schwarzbart** asked if Metro would be able to handle increased passenger loads in light of higher fuel prices. **Mr. Scott** said that the ultimate goal was to have 100 percent 8-car trains during peak hours and, if necessary, they can run trains every 2 minutes instead of every 2.5 minutes. At that point, the rail system would be at maximum capacity. WMATA forecasts that by the year 2030, it could carry in excess of 1 million riders per day. **Mr. Scott** believes the system could get there far sooner. WMATA has already exceeded an average 800,000 daily riders for some months.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** suggested that the Committee could write a letter of support for dedicated WMATA funding to the appropriate funding authorities, and also partner with other organizations.

**Mr. Scott** answered that a letter may not be needed right now, as Amtrak legislation is out of WMATA control at the moment; other pending legislation will be considered in the next Congress.

**Mr. Scott** added that current fare box revenues cover 50 percent of WMATA's operating costs; rail fare recovery is 80 percent (higher than most systems), and bus recovery is 30 percent.

**Mr. Scott** also spoke to the group about other Federal initiatives, including attempting to reduce WMATA's carbon footprint.

**Item 5 – Nominations for Vice Chair:** **Mr. Schwarzbart** requested that nominations be made for the recently vacated vice-chair position. **Jeffery Slavin** nominated **Leslie Olson** for the position. Due to lack of a quorum, the vote will be taken at the September meeting (no August meeting).

**Item 6. Other Business:** **Jim Carlson** discussed some of the issues that were brought up at the June 11 Pedestrian Safety meeting with Maryland SHA, at which **Barbara Tauben** and **Bob Cope** were also present. Ms. Tauben represented the Friendship Heights Village Civic Association. The SHA representatives were **K. Adenaiya** and **Anyesha Mookherjee**. Among those items discussed were midblock crossings and specific places where improvements were needed. **Mr. Carlson** also said that **Ms. Tauben** made her case that a red

arrow controlling north-bound Wisconsin Avenue turns was needed on Willard Avenue at the Wisconsin Avenue intersection.

The group discussed some of these safety issues, both pedestrian and traffic related, and **Mr. Schwarzbart** said that we would revisit these issues at a later date.

**Mr. Carlson** stated that the taxi signs on Willard will be removed, and taxis will no longer be allowed to park in front of Lia's. Additionally, **Sandra Brecher** mentioned that the County Taxi Code Enforcement staff now has the power of issuing citations to taxis illegally standing. They have not previously had this ability. Code Enforcement consists of two staff that must cover the entire county; they are not able to respond to calls regarding violations, but will make spot checks and ticket violators.

**Ms. Brecher** showed the committee the new sign for the Friendship Heights **TRiPS** store. The signs themselves will be backlit, and the lettering on the signs raised. **Ms. Brecher** showed the group three possible designs, and asked for feedback.

**Mr. Carlson** discussed the most recent Commuter Survey. Since GEICO did not provide any responses this year, and they comprise the majority of those surveyed, another round of surveys will be given in the fall

Meeting adjourned at 10 am  
Next meeting date: September 9, 2008